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ABSTRACT

To determine the status of latchkey programs in the United States, a questionnaire requesting information on actual or pending latchkey programs and legislation was sent to each state superintendent of schools and the secretary of the education committee of the state legislatures in the 50 states. A content analysis of the questionnaire responses and accompanying literature was made. Data was quantified and tabulated in terms of six general questions: (1) What are the characteristics of latchkey children? (2) What are the characteristics of latchkey parents? (3) What is the nature (types) of programs designated for latchkey children? (4) On what kind of demographic data are latchkey programs based? (5) What kinds of data are keyed to the designing of successful latchkey programs? and (6) What is the present and pending status of latchkey legislation in the 50 states? A total of 31 questionnaires with related literature were returned. State-by-state summaries of responses are provided in six tables. Results indicated that few programs are available for latchkey children. Generally, existing programs were extensions of day care and were social and recreational in nature. Many involved teaching survival skills to home-alone children. Only Illinois had passed legislation for latchkey children. It is concluded that latchkey programs must be expanded. A two-page bibliography is included. (RH)

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STATUS OF LATCH-KEY PROGRAMS

A NATIONAL SURVEY

By

RUTH CARMEN REYNOLDS

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CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the status of latchkey programs in the United States.

Significance of the Study

During the past forty years profound changes have taken place in American society which have had a significant impact on families and children. There have been two changes of greatest importance. Fifty-three percent of all children under the age of eighteen have mothers who work either full or part-time, and sixty-two percent of such children living in single parent household headed by women in the workforce. The pace of these changes accelerated during the 1970's. Recent labor force and employment status figures project that the school age population of children between the ages of five and thirteen will rise from thirty million in 1980 to thirty-five million by the year 2000 and that seventy-five percent of all women will be employed. By most estimates there are at least six million children between the ages of five and fourteen across the nation who are without direct adult supervision for significant periods of time on a regular basis.

As economic and social pressures cause more women to work outside the home, the latchkey child phenomenon will increase. These children have traditionally been described as those who carry their own door key to lock the house as they leave for school in the morning and/ or let themselves into an empty house at the end of the school day. The latchkey child phenomenon has been a topic of concern since a large number of unsupervised children became visible during World War II as a larger number of mothers worked in war plants.

Increased attention has been focused on such children, but research studies in this area are still in their infancy. However, research has shown that the need for child-care and support services for latchkey children under self-care face many risks: negative feeling, insecurity, accidents, abuse, neglect and fear. Few studies have been done on the effect of adult supervision versus its lack on the development and school performance of latchkey children. The data suggest that children with continuous adult supervision have fewer developmental problems than those left under their own care. It is obvious that schools, parents and the communities must address the special program needs of latchkey children. There is a need to know the types

and basis of latchkey programs, the situation concerning the passage of latchkey legislation in the United States and the status of current research. There is a need for special programs, and the failure to recognize and support them identifies a fundamental societal weakness that may have far-reaching implications for the future of families.

The findings of this study would be useful to educators, legislatures, community groups and parents interested in the welfare of latchkey children and the establishment of latch-key or child-care programs.

Questions of the Study

The study will attempt to provide answers to the following general questions:

1. What are the characteristics of latchkey children?
2. What are the characteristics of latchkey parents?
3. What is the nature (types) of programs designed for latchkey children?
4. On what kind of demographic data are latchkey programs based?
5. What kinds of data are keyed to designing of successful latchkey programs?
6. What is the present and pending status of latchkey legislation in the fifty states?

Procedures

Population

The population for this study will include fifty state superintendents of schools and the secretary of education committee of state legislatures in fifty states.

Sample

The sample will be the population based on the number of questionnaires returned.

Method of Data Collection

A questionnaire requesting information on actual or pending latchkey programs and legislation will be sent to each state superintendent of schools and the secretary of the education committee of the state legislatures in the fifty states. Brochures and relevant literature was also requested. Follow-up letters will be sent to members of the sample that did not respond.

Instrument

The questionnaire will consist of questions relating to the number of programs, legislation and literature on the type of program. The respondents were instructed to indicate whether they have on-going or pending latchkey programs and/or related legislation in

the state and to send literature on pending and established programs.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study may have some of the following limitations:

1. The findings are applicable only to the population.
2. The respondents may not respond fully and honestly.
3. The return rate of the questionnaire may be inadequate.
4. The respondents may not understand the issues.
5. Some states may not have or plan to establish latchkey programs.
6. State officials may not be aware of local and/or private latchkey-type programs.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes the following:

1. The respondents will respond fully and honestly.
2. The respondents will cooperate in returning the questionnaire.
3. The respondents will understand the issues.
4. State officials will be aware of local efforts regarding latchkey programs.

Definition of Terms

Latchkey programs - An after school program designed to provide adult supervision for school-age

children where there is no adult supervision at home.

Latchkey children - School-age children who return home after school alone where there is no adult supervision.

Treatment of Data

A content analysis of the questionnaire and accompanying literature will be conducted; the data will be quantified and tabulated in terms of the general questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Rooney (1983), the term "latchkey" is an Eighteenth Century one used to describe the tool used to lift the latch on a door.Children who wear door keys around their necks have been traditionally called "latchkey children." These children are cared for under the latchkey arrangement.

Present licensing of childcare facilities is primarily for preschool ages, according to Rooney (1983). The Federal standards for child care services were eliminated in 1981 by the Reagan Administration. The states now set their own standards and enforcement policies. The same source claimed that the new standards imposed by the states are deficient or restricted in their applications.

Long (1983) found that many parents using the latchkey arrangement slip into self-care by default. Parents find that work demands came before continuous adult supervision of their children can be arranged. They cannot find available or affordable adult-care spaces. Their children resist attending child-care programs that are not age appropriate. Parents then

begin with self-care on an occasional basis. Nothing untowards happens, the children are able to cope, and soon the children are averaging two and half hours of self-care per day. Most single parents, for may reasons, but economic ones in particular, who need alternative child care go into the latchkey arrangement on the first day of employment. This arrangement, be it for children from two-parent homes or single-parent homes, crosses all social, racial and economic groups.

As latchkey children grow at an alarming pace, critical issues for parents, children and child-care professionals begin to emerge, according to Stroman and Duff (1982). A persisting concern among some individuals related the effect of the latchkey situation on the children involved. Garbarino (1981) and Long and Long (1982) found that some of these children feel rejected, but the number is not known. Some are more prone than others towards delinquent behavior (Child Welfare, 1982). But, again, the number is unknown. Nor do we really know if they do worse in school. Quality research is greatly needed in these areas. Banducci (1967) found that in terms of educational aspirations, expectation, and achievement, the full-time employment of mothers had little, if any,

detrimental effect on their children. For lower socio-economic families, children of working mothers generally earned higher grades than children of nonworking mothers. The findings appeared to indicate a trend rather than a cause and effect relationship. On the other hand, the data seemed to indicate that unsupervised children are more likely to be victims of accidents and sexual attacks by siblings and nonparental adults, Garbarino (1981). According to Long and Long (1983) the most serious problems the latchkey child face are psychological. The children lock themselves in closets or hide under beds until parents or an adult return home. In the absence of adults and friends, these children are fearful and develop an overwhelming sense of aloneness. The latchkey arrangement discourages social interaction between peers, as these children are restricted to their homes. The profile of latchkey children shows that they neither do more chores nor watch more television than their peers, but often show great responsibility in taking care of brothers and sisters (Instructor, May 1982). It is the premature burden of responsibility, when it occurs in a negative emotional climate, that seems to be damaging to these children. However, Long and Long (1983), Garbarino

(1981) and Stroman and Duff (1982) agree that the evidence regarding the welfare of latchkey children is insufficient to point to clearcut negative or positive consequences. However, Long (1983) argues that for the older child the responsibility of being on one's own before and after school is an opportunity rather than a negative influence.

We know that the social climate of a family has a great deal to do with how its members cope with the stresses of life. Where the parent is uncomfortable with leaving a child alone or in the care of older children, the hours of nonsupervision by an adult can be fraught with worry. Stress in itself is destructive, and caring parents, at best, are uneasy in leaving children unsupervised.

What can be done to help? Long and Long (1985), as well as most concerned social agencies, feel that business and community leaders must find a solution to the dilemma of the nation's latchkey children. Employers should consider more flexible working hours for parents and be a source of information about child-care services. There has been an absence at all levels of organized effort in addressing the plight of latchkey children and their parents. Reports of isolated efforts

to organize programs for them are scanty, at best, when compared to the need.

The answers to the latchkey problem will vary with the child, the family and the community. But the problem must be addressed by parents and the greater community as well. All must be willing to ensure that care is provided for children left in self-care by parents who are forced into the latchkey experience by social and economic pressures (Childhood Educator, December 1982).

The home alone child is national in scope and Stewart (1981), in her review of literature, found that it is international in scope as well. The need for after-school care for children is universal. But, as Stewart (1981) found in her study, no country provides adequate space or even has data indicating where school-age children are being cared for.

As parent awareness develops, both as to the number of latchkey children in society and the possible negative consequences attached to this arrangement, more parents will seek child-care programs. There are many school-sponsored after-school care programs as well as community-sponsored family day-care programs, (Childhood Educator, December 1982).

Dali (1982) believes that care outside of the home could offer, or give, latchkey children opportunities for cognitive growth that many parents may not be able to provide. It is further noted by Dali (1982) that there is little or no information on how school-age child-care allows parents to pursue career goals and ways in which outside care would affect the family.

Because more and more children are experiencing the latchkey way of life, and more attention is given to the issue, Strother (1984) found that there is now some competition over who "owns" the latchkey children issue. Day-care specialists advocate establishment of school-based child-care programs from available resources. These high-quality child-care programs would be open to all families who need them. Child welfare and child abuse prevention organizations believe that curricula devoted to survival skills better prepare children to take care of themselves. Such curricula seem to condone self-care for children. Strother (1984) further noted that feminists have also become involved in the issue. They believe that a choice of child-care arrangement should be made available to working parents who cannot otherwise afford them. Strother (1984) adds

that researchers have also entered the debate and in some cases the researchers are using inadequate data which confuses the issue.

Long and Long (1982) notes that a major task is getting parents to see that after-school programs may be a solution to their problem. But until a particular program gains a reputation for excellence, parents are hesitant about embracing a single program.

According to Stickney (1981) the reasons for operating child-care programs are as diverse as the programs themselves. His research found that some programs are custodial. They keep children off the streets. Some prepare children for school, while others supplement school experiences. Many are babysitting services so that parents can work. Some are remedial, and others are "child development" centers (which Stickney (1981) supports). The objectives of a "Latch Key Development" program are to provide children with an opportunity to engage in activities which benefit them emotionally, physically and educationally. However, Stickney's program seems to overlook such emergencies as children who may be ill, parents who may be working overtime and days when there is no school.

Cramer and others (1977) advocate the

establishment of afterschool "Latch Key" programs that utilize tax-supported schools to meet the needs of all age groups in the community. Many advocates feel that successful programs have survived because they have met the needs of a changing society. There is no single or "one right" program for communities to establish.

More often than not, the same children who must spend portions of every day without adult-care during the school year must also spend even larger segments of time alone during summer vacations and holidays. Research has shown that there are risks for latchkey children and especially for children in urban areas. The latchkey situation is a social problem, and national attitudes toward latchkey children must go beyond addressing these risks. Parents need not be reminded of these risks, as they already feel guilty and worried about self-care arrangements.

The findings are inconclusive as to the type of programs that will meet the needs of the latchkey situation. Research has shown that each community must develop a program that responds to local problems and tailored to local needs.

Further research on latchkey children should be directed at examining the environment in which they live

and what attributes affect the latchkey child's personal and social development. There is a need for quantitative research. A review of literature has revealed a great deal of concern about the lack of enough school-age child care centers and the lack of affordable school-age child care programs. Federal agencies have given the legal task to the state agencies to lay the groundwork for school-age child-care programs. The financial outlook for funding latchkey programs is not as good, as the main sources for funds are parents and the private sector. Communities must support efforts to obtain federal funds to help fill the growing gap in the life of children under self-care. Society must do something to make employment and parental responsibilities fit together better and ensure that affordable high-quality, child-care programs are made available to all in need.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the status of Latchkey Programs in the United States.

General Questions To Be Studied

1. What are the characteristics of latchkey children?
2. What are the characteristics of latchkey parents?
3. What is the nature (types) of programs designed for latchkey children?
4. On what kind of demographic data are latchkey programs based?
5. What kinds of data are keyed to designing of successful latchkey programs?
6. What is the present and pending status of latchkey legislation in the fifty states?

Procedure of the Study

Population and Sample

The population for this study will include fifty state superintendents of schools and the secretary of education committee of state legislatures in the fifty states. The sample will be the population and ultimately based on the number of questionnaires returned.

Method of Data Collection

A questionnaire requesting information on actual or pending latchkey programs and legislation was sent to each state superintendent of schools and the secretary of the education committee of the state legislature in fifty states. Brochures and relevant literature were also requested. The respondents were asked to return the information to the researcher by January 31, 1985.

Instrument

Since no appropriate instrument was available, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed to provide identification data as to the actual on-going or pending latchkey programs and legislation. Brochures and relevant literature were also requested.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine the status of Latchkey programs in the United States.

A letter/questionnaire was mailed to each state superintendent of schools and the secretary of the committee of the state legislature in fifty states. Thirty-one questionnaires and related literature were returned to the researcher. Of the thirty-one responses returned, fourteen states indicated that they had some type of latchkey program. A number of states are contemplating some form of "child-care," "parental participation," "latchkey" policy. None of the states had passed latchkey legislation, except Illinois. To determine the status of latchkey programs the investigator did a content analysis of the responses.

To analyze the information, six questions were formulated to classify and code the responses.

Content Analysis Questions

1. What are the characteristics of latchkey children?
2. What are the characteristics of latchkey parents?
3. What is the nature (types) of programs designed for latchkey children?

4. On what kind of demographic data are latchkey programs based?

5. What kinds of data are keyed to designing of successful latchkey programs?

6. What is the present and pending status of latckey legislation in the fifty states?

The data were interpreted in terms of the above questions on a state-by-state basis, then summarized in terms of the total responses. Interpretation of the documents was difficult. In many instances the information given was incomplete. State departments of education personnel appeared not to be well informed on the topic; they had little or no information on local or state child-care programs. Most programs were local initiatives, rather than state instituted. It appears that the latchkey movement is still in its infancy. To the investigator, it seems that few state officials were fully aware of or informed on the need for latchkey programs. Local agencies appeared to have a greater understanding of and involvement with latchkey issues and programs.

Content Analysis

A content analysis of the letters and documents indicated involvement or development of latchkey or continual day-care programs before and/or after school

by fourteen states. Their responses were similar.

A state-by-state summarization of responses to general question one, "What are the characteristics of latchkey children?" are presented in Table I.

I. The characteristics of the children that would qualify for a latchkey programs were:

   a. From middle and low-income and poverty-level families.

   b. Family structure was single or two-parent career oriented.

   c. Children were home alone after school - no adult supervision.

   d. Children could be abused, neglected, exploited or in danger; special education children were also included.

   e. Age level of minor children were from six to eighteen years.

A state-by-state summarization of responses to general question two, "What are the characteristics of latchkey parents?" are presented in Table II.

II. The characteristics of the parents were:

   a. Single and/or two-career parent families.

   b. Welfare or poverty family heads being trained for or seeking employment.

   c. Parents could provide no after-school adult supervision for their children.

   d. Could include temporarily ill parents.

TABLE I

CHARACTERISTICS OF LATCHKEY CHILDREN

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	children at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation special education children included.
FLORIDA	middle and low income families; primary and elementary school age children.
ILLINOIS	children at risk, need supplemental care or who require care pending return of parents or guardians.
INDIANA	YMCA Sponsored - school age children 7 - 17 no parent or supervision at home.
KENTUCKY	minors who are endangered; abused-neglected children; children who are home alone.
MAINE	home alone older children - no supervision from end of school day to 6:00 - 7:00 P.M.; day-care.
MICHIGAN	home alone older day-care children - no supervision at end of school day to 6:00 - 7:00 P.M.
MINNESOTA	older day-care elementary school children at home alone after school.
OHIO	latchkey children in need of physical and psychological safety; no supervision; ages 7- 17.
NEW JERSEY	unsupervised after school; older day-care elementary school children at home alone after school.
NEW YORK	children at risk in terms of abuse neglect or exploitation; special education children included.
RHODE ISLAND	unsupervised after school children ages 6 - 17; home alone children.
VIRGINIA	unsupervised after school children ages 6 - 17; home alone children.
WISCONSIN	children at risk - drop outs, minority, single-parent (working) - children at home alone.

TABLE II

CHARACTERISTICS OF LATCHKEY PARENTS

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	family in need of child care services need protective service; employed or seeking job.
FLORIDA	both parents working or single parent working middle or low income.
ILLINOIS	employed parents or engaged in other activities requiring absence from home.
INDIANA	low income families - most are single parent households; both parents work.
KENTUCKY	low income families - working parents; most families are single parent households.
MAINE	working single parents - households headed by women; 48 percent live in poverty.
MICHIGAN	working parents; most families are single parent households.
MINNESOTA	poor parents; two parents or single parent work can provide no after school child supervision.
OHIO	working or parents seeking work; both single and two-parent families.
NEW JERSEY	poor parents - single or two-career households can provide no after school child supervision.
NEW YORK	employed or seeking employment - in need of child care services.
RHODE ISLAND	parents working or seeking work
VIRGINIA	parents working or seeking work; parents of abused or neglected children.
WISCONSIN	working single or two-parent families; middle or low income.

A state-by-state summarization of responses to general question three, "What is the nature (types) of programs designed for latchkey children?" are presented in Table III.

III. The nature or type of latchkey programs were:

a. Generally an extension of preschool education (ages 1-6).

b. Many were volunteer-based (YMCA, church, boys clubs, etc.) a small fee of $15.00 to $20.00 a week was charged.

c. The content of the programs was basically social and recreational and some academic activities, e.g., help with homework, library and reading type activities and survival skill curriculum.

d. Others included discussions on how latchkey children could survive, activities at home, "phone-a-friend," "block houses" (place of safety) and "home alone training."

e. Others included parental education workshops to help their latchkey children and child care training.

f. Most of the programs were located in not-for-profit, private agencies in particurlarly - the YMCA. Very few appeared to use public school facilities after school. However, there appears a changing trend in that direction.

g. Many of the programs appeared to be designated as continual day care, rather than latchkey, "per se."

h. Latchkey programs were local rather than state wide.

TABLE III

NATURE OR TYPE OF LATCHKEY PROGRAMS

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	extended day school services, can use contracted agencies; held in public schools or contracted.
FLORIDA	child care, volunteer after school programs, school-based school age child care programs.
ILLINOIS	homework, physical exercise, snacks, additional educational offerings; held in public schools.
INDIANA	latchkey - 2:30 to 6:00 P.M. after school - reading to sports, arts, play - (parent workshop).
KENTUCKY	local - YMCA sponsored and run after school 2:00 - 6:00 P.M. (summer 6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.); $15.00 per week.
MAINE	child care, home alone training, child protection, assist working parents; train on child care issue.
MICHIGAN	housed in public schools - continuation of academic and recreational activities.
MINNESOTA	pending day-care for older children; academic/social/ recreational.
OHIO	nonspecific - based on local needs with peer socialization, recreation and homework assistance.
NEW JERSEY	general before and after school day-care programs.
NEW YORK	general day-care services.
RHODE ISLAND	academic/recreational YMCA sponsored programs with local public schools - not state-wide.
VIRGINIA	information not available.
WISCONSIN	"phone-a-friend," "working parent hotline," "after school day-care" and "latchkey survival" skills.

A state-by-state summarization of responses to general question four, "On what kind of demographic data are latchkey programs based?" are presented in Table IV.

IV. The demographic data employed to establish latchkey programs appeared:

a. To be based more on national than local surveys and sources.

b. There were few local studies. Rhode Island, New York and Maine appeared to be the only ones that relied on a local needs assessment data base.

c. Many or most used national data from the School-Age Child Care Project based at Wellesby College, national and local conferences on latchkey children and national publications.

d. The data included: number of working parents, number of unsupervised children at home after school, number of single parent and two-career families.

e. Local pressure appeared to derive from the increased number of unsupervised children in the streets, vandalism, gang-related problems, crime, drug use, child abuse, neglect, etc. Public opinion also played a role.

f. Reduction in federal funding for city-sponsored, school-sponsored programs for youth was cited by some of the respondents.

A state-by state summarization of responses to general question five, "What kinds of data are keyed to designing of successful latchkey programs?" are presented in Table V.

TABLE IV

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA EMPLOYED TO ESTABLISH LATCHKEY PROGRAMS

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	number of women in labor force, number of children ages 5 - 14 years, and number of families on ADC with dependent children.
FLORIDA	no formal studies, local community information; presently preparing a report.
ILLINOIS	based on state and local needs - to provide before and after school care for employed parents and guardians who are absent from home after school.
INDIANA	none specifically - local community needs and needs of home alone children.
KENTUCKY	no local demographic data, relying on public opinion - community/parental input.
MAINE	local survey; two-thirds of parents are women with children under 13 years are working or seeking work; 500 five-year olds home alone; 5 state-wide programs.
MICHIGAN	Michigan State Department of Education does not collect information on latchkey children. The information was collected at local levels.
MINNESOTA	not indicated - except community/school/parental pressures and publicity.
OHIO	national demographic data of 5.2 million latchkey children.
NEW JERSEY	based on national data and reports - SACC.
NEW YORK	survey data from New York Council on Children and Families.
RHODE ISLAND	community action committee conducted a 4,429 family survey, 337 families needed after school care for their children.
VIRGINIA	not indicated.
WISCONSIN	needs of working parents and home-alone children; none specifically, but need to help children at risk.

TABLE V

DATA KEY TO DESIGNING SUCCESSFUL LATCHKEY PROGRAMS

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	based on day-care type programs; needs of community.
FLORIDA	general need of increased number of poverty and single parents.
ILLINOIS	based on day-care, recreational, and educational needs of children Kindergarten - 6th grade, local community level.
INDIANA	social/recreational interest of children, arts/crafts, sports - not academically inclined.
KENTUCKY	based on child's day-care and schooling needs.
MAINE	reduction in federal funding; increase in number of working mothers; need for quality child care.
MICHIGAN	Michigan State Department of Education does not collect latchkey information. Done on local levels.
MINNESOTA	no specific data - input from school officials and community.
OHIO	none indicated - based on national information.
NEW JERSEY	needs of community and families/children - stop drug use, vandalism, crime, etc.
NEW YORK	Governor's push for school-community partnerships. State funds for private (non-profit) government agencies.
RHODE ISLAND	based on needs of community, children and families.
VIRGINIA	based on needs of community, children and families.
WISCONSIN	awareness of children at risk and community pressure for latchkey "help" programs.

V. The kinds of data that appeared to key the designing of successful latchkey programs were:

a. General community/parental pressure to do something to resolve the problem of home-alone children.

b. The alarming increase in the number of single and working parents.

c. In terms of the specific latchkey programs curricula and activities, the goal was to meet the social, psychological and interest needs of the children.

d. An overriding factor appeared to be to "get them off the streets" and into a safe, adult-supervised and constructive haven.

e. The programs appeared to be an extension of school activities, but with less emphasis on academics.

A state-by-state summarization of responses to general question six, "What is the present and pending status of latchkey legislation in the fifty states?" are presented in Table VI.

IV. The present and pending status of latchkey legislation in the various states was:

a. One of the states (at the time of this study) had passed legislation specifically for "latchkey" children.

b. California and New Jersey had two bills, the former waiting the signature of the governor (had been voted previously) and the latter has two bills waiting for a "floor" vote. Nebraska has pending legislation.

TABLE VI

PRESENT AND/OR PENDING STATUS OF LATCHKEY LEGISLATION

STATES	RESPONSES
CALIFORNIA	pending legislation; SB 303 waiting signature.
FLORIDA	no legislation.
ILLINOIS	passed latchkey legislation; effective July 1, 1984.
INDIANA	no state legislation.
KENTUCKY	no latchkey legislation; rely on minor statutes.
MAINE	no legislation; developed by task force.
MICHIGAN	no legislation.
MINNESOTA	no pending legislation; only sex abuse legislation.
OHIO	attempt to introduce legislation.
NEW JERSEY	two latchkey bills pending - no floor vote yet.
NEW YORK	no legislation - governor support.
RHODE ISLAND	no state legislation - only local resolutions.
VIRGINIA	recommendations to be presented to legislation.
WISCONSIN	no legislation.

c. Some of the states, e.g., Montana, Ohio, Wisconsin and others are relying on general day-care legislation and statutes on child-welfare and abused, neglected and abandoned children.

d. The legal basis for most of the latchkey programs is local policy and resolutions. State departments in Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maine, New York and Wisconsin have taken the lead and encouraged and assisted local jurisdictions in establishing latchkey programs, particularly those that are associated with and housed in the public schools.

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Reported SACC type programs in cities and counties

1. Fairfax County, Virginia (45)
2. Santa Monica, California
3. Lincoln, Nebraska (pending legislation)
4. Oak Park, Illinois
5. Nashville, Tennessee
6. Palm Beach County, Florida
7. Minneapolis, Minnesota (Committee Education Department)
8. Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida
9. Houston, Texas (Houston individual school districts, 2000 children)
10. New Orleans Public Schools, New Orleans, Louisiana
11. Erie County Public Schools, New York, New York
12. Kansas City, Missouri - (worked with four school districts)
13. Madison, Wisconsin

Conclusion

The data seem to indicate that although the home-alone children problem is national in scope, resolutions have come from the "grassroots" or local community levels. However, expansion of latchkey programs will need the support of public officials -- state departments of education, school districts, local and state governments and, ultimately, federal funding.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the status of latchkey programs in the United States. The state superintendent of schools and the secretary of the education committee of state legislatures in the fifty states were surveyed.

The letter/questionnaire mailed requested information on actual on-going or pending latchkey programs and/or related legislation in the state and literature on their programs. A content analysis was done on a state-by-state summarized basis in terms of total responses. The responses were classified and coded in terms of six general questions.

Summary

The results indicated that few programs are available for latchkey children. Of the thirty-one responses, fourteen states had passed legislation or policies regarding latchkey programs. Some states were proposing latchkey policies. Many states did not respond. Fourteen of the states responding gave similar responses. Generally their programs were extensions of day-care rather than latchkey and were basically social

and recreational in nature with some academic activities, such as, reading and homework assistance. Many programs involved teaching home-alone children survival skills, such as: "phone-a-friend," "safe-houses," and "home-alone-training."

Most programs were located in and operated by private, non-profit agencies, such as, the YMCA or churches. Very few had parental education workshops that would increase parents awareness as to the risks that latchkey children face.

Only one of the fourteen states (Illinois) had passed legislation for latchkey children. Most relied on general day-care legislation and statutes on child-welfare, abused, neglected and abandoned children. The legal basis for most of the latchkey programs was local policies and resolutions. A few of the states encouraged local jurisdictions to establish latchkey programs, especially those associated with the public schools.

The data were difficult to interpret. Many of the states gave incomplete information to the following questions: the number of school-age children cared for under their programs, the number of after school programs, whether the programs included non-school day

or summer care.

Conclusions

A majority of state officials surveyed did not have data on the number of and kind of school-age child-care programs. Nor did they have data on the number and location of available school-age child-care centers.

Data on the number of children in latchkey programs was confusing and difficult to determine from the literature received. The data indicated that latchkey children from all socio-economic levels could qualify for a program and the fee charged was based on ability to pay.

The home-alone child is national in scope, and Stewart (1981), in her review of literature, notes it is international as well. After-school care is a universal need, but no country provides adequate space or even have data indicating where school-age children are being cared for.

Long, in an article in the Sun Times on April 28, 1985, argues that business and community leaders must find a solution to the dilemma of the nation's latchkey children who are facing many psychological problems. Fear is the problem most often quoted by home-alone

children.

Dali (1982) notes that care outside of the home could offer latchkey children opportunities for cognitive growth that many parents may not be able to provide. There is little information on how school-age child-care allows parents to pursue career goals and ways in which child-care outside of the home would affect the family.

The latchkey situation is a social problem and there are many risks for these children, especially for children in urban areas. Latchkey children are more likely to be victims of accidents and sexual attacks by siblings and nonparental adults as noted by Garbarino (1981). Therefore, to help lessen the risks latchkey children must face, latchkey programs must be expanded. The programs need the support of public officials. Resolutions must come from all levels of government, not just from the "grassroots" or local community levels.

Implications

The data indicate that the states are becoming increasingly aware of the need for latchkey programs. Unfortunately, however, most state departments of education have not taken the initiative in the areas of recognizing the problem of home-alone children,

collected data or conducted research, educated educators and the public about the latchkey problem nor established programs for latchkey children in the public schools.

The findings seem to suggest that even at the local level, very few school districts have established or helped to establish before and after-school programs for home-alone children. Instead, local agencies (YMCA, churches, civic and community groups, etc.) have taken the initiative to found and set-up latchkey-care programs. It has been an individual, private, grassroots effort rather than governmental. National and urban organizations such as, The School-Age Child-Care Project and The Child Abuse Prevention programs, have, in many cases, been the catalyst for latchkey conferences, policies, pending legislation and ultimately programs.

It will be through these private, national and local levels that the latchkey program movement will take hold nationally.

Recommendations

The power of the states to set their own standards and enforcement methods for child-care services was given to them by the federal government in 1981. The issue of unsupervised children has been a

concern for many decades. This issue is receiving more attention as increased number of single-parents and two-parent households must work for economic reasons. Because of this and the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Each state should conduct a survey on the status of child-care programs.

2. Local officials should undertake a study designed to determine the number of alternative programs available for school-age child-care.

3. The state legislature should take immediate action to pass state laws or policies mandating continuous adult supervision for school-age children.

4. Local officials should not rely on "grassroot" organizations to start and implement alternative child-care programs.

5. The community and education leaders should undertake the planning of programs that include the use of public school facilities for after-school programs.

6. The program developers should develop workshop-inservice programs for parents to motivate their acceptance of latchkey programs and increase their awareness of the risks these children, as well as, the community face.

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